



WEST VIRGINIA PARKWAYS AUTHORITY

P.O. BOX 1469
CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA 25325-1469
TELEPHONE: 304/926-1900
FAX: 304/926-1909
www.wvturnpike.com
E-ZPass: 1-800-206-6222

FOR RELEASE: FEBRUARY 8, 2016

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, CONTACT:

GREG BARR
GENERAL MANAGER
WEST VIRGINIA PARKWAYS AUTHORITY
(304) 926-1900

PARKWAYS AUTHORITY PASSES RESOLUTION OPPOSING REMOVAL OF TOLLS ON WEST VIRGINIA TURNPIKE

Charleston – The West Virginia Parkways Authority's governing board passed a resolution in support of the continuation of tolls on the West Virginia Turnpike once existing bonds are paid in full. Final payment on these bonds is scheduled for May 15, 2019.

The board adopted this resolution at its January meeting to urge the West Virginia Legislature to amend the existing legislation requiring the cessation of tolls after the bonds are paid. The Parkways Authority board concluded that neither removing the tolls, nor abolishing the Parkways Authority, would be in the best interest of the State of West Virginia and its citizens.

Board Member William Cipriani noted that members do not receive compensation for their service and, therefore, are only concerned with the future financial interests of the state by their support of tolls.

Parkways Authority General Manager Greg Barr said elimination of tolls would result in the voluntary surrender of about \$85 million of annual revenue. A total of 76% of all West Virginia Turnpike toll revenues come from out-of-state passenger and commercial vehicles, a total of \$64.5 million annually. The 88-mile Turnpike has 426 lane miles and 116 bridges.

Without the toll revenue, the entire cost of operating the West Virginia Turnpike would shift directly or indirectly to the taxpayers of West Virginia. Barr estimated that over a 30-year period, West Virginia would lose about \$2.5 billion in revenue from tolls, \$2 billion of which comes from out-of-state users of the West Virginia Turnpike.

The board also noted that in addition to the loss of funds to pay for Turnpike maintenance and capital improvements to its roads and bridges there would be many other repercussions, including the elimination of up to 360 full- and part-time Turnpike jobs and the loss of funds to operate a full-time Turnpike State Police Troop. Board member Victor Grigoraci expressed his personal concern regarding the morale of Parkways Authority employees who may be uncertain about the future of their jobs.

Barr said in 2009, following the first toll increase in 28 years, the authority began a 10-year, \$242 million paving program to address essential deferred maintenance and capital improvements. Over the next 30 years, it is estimated that 80% of the Turnpike's 116 bridges will need deck replacements. The first deck replacement will begin in the spring of 2016. By 2020, 94% of the bridges will be more than 35 years old and during the next 30 years will exceed their expected deck life of 40 years. If tolls are removed, Barr said, that cost will add significantly to the current deferred maintenance amount facing the West Virginia Division of Highways.

The Parkways Authority, through its customer service center, continues to offer generous discounts to E-ZPass customers to lessen the costs to both personal and commercial users of the Turnpike. In addition, a West Virginia tax deduction is permitted for tolls paid with WV E-ZPass. Both of these options help local residents who regularly travel the Turnpike.

In May 2015, the West Virginia Blue Ribbon Commission on Highways issued a report that concluded that West Virginia needs an additional \$750 million a year simply to preserve and improve its other roads and bridges. Another \$380 million a year is needed to provide for expansion of the existing highway system. According to the report, the annual shortfall for West Virginia transportation needs is expected to exceed \$1.13 billion.

The Parkways Authority resolution noted that the authority receives no funding from the state of West Virginia or the federal government for any maintenance, operation or capital repairs needed by the Turnpike. Tolls, or "user fees," provide all the funds for the maintenance, operations and capital repairs for the Turnpike. This allows the state to use other Division of Highways dollars on other highways and bridges in West Virginia. Removing tolls from the Turnpike will not increase the funding the DOH receives from the Federal Highway Administration.

Authority member William Seaver of Mercer County, an outspoken proponent of using toll revenue, noted that after the bonds are paid off and the cost of operating and maintaining the Turnpike are covered, the authority could create a Southern West Virginia Transportation Fund. Seaver said the fund could benefit roads and other qualified projects in the region.

To read the entire resolution, visit www.wvturnpike.com and click on About-Facts and Information.

#